

The Holy Spirit As a Pledge

Much has been written about the Holy Spirit being given as an "earnest" of our inheritance. Theories are many. Some hold the position that reference is to a personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit today. Others say the "earnest" amounts to the promises made by the Holy Spirit to the obedient.

A careful study of Ephesians chapter one will shed a great deal of light on the subject. And it might be added that the light is much needed. Turn in your New Testament and read Ephesians one as you consider this article.

In my office there are thirteen commentaries on the book of Ephesians. All except one (Karl Braune, in *Lange's Commentary*) take the position that Paul, in this chapter, discusses two groups. They are the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians. He refers to the first group with the words "we" and "us," and to the latter with "ye" and "you." This is clearly shown in verses 12 and 13. Note the "we" and "ye" in these verses as follows: "To the end that we should be unto the praise of His glory, we who had before hoped in Christ: in whom ye also, having heard the word of the truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance."

"We who had before hoped in Christ" are the Jews. They had received the Old Testament promise of a Messiah; walked with him in Galilee; and had been in the kingdom since the Pentecost following the resurrection. The Gentile Christians are identified and separated (v. 13) from the Jews by the statement "in whom ye also." The Gentiles also received what the Jews had received. But it came a few years later. They heard, believed, and received the Holy Spirit of promise. This was at the house of Cornelius as recorded in Acts chapter ten. Read carefully the last few verses of Acts ten. There is a clear reference by Paul in Ephesians 1:13 to what happened in Acts ten at the house of Cornelius.

Paul said the Gentiles also heard, believed, and were "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance." The account of this by Luke says, "while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Spirit fell on all them that heard the word. And they of the circumcision that believed were



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amazed, as many as came with Peter because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:44,45). Peter was speaking (see the preceding verses in Acts 10) about Jesus as the anointed of God. The Gentiles heard and were obviously believers. The Holy Spirit was poured out on them. The Jews had received a like outpouring on Pentecost.

Now, let us consider the statement, "ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance." We have already shown that the "ye also" of verse 13 are the Gentiles (now Christians) in contrast to the "we" (Jews) in verse 12. Therefore, the statement "ye were sealed" points again to the Gentiles. The "seal" is a stamp or mark. The Gentiles were marked and authenticated as God's heritage (See Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 519).

Concerning the statement, "with the Holy Spirit of promise," Robertson has this to say: "Here 'of promise' is added to the Holy Spirit to show that Gentiles are also included in God's promise of salvation." Robertson is exactly right. However, few, if any, writers go on to show that the Holy Spirit came on the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius in keeping with God's promise. And that the coming of the Holy Spirit on that occasion was the pledge or earnest of the inheritance of the Gentiles. This was a demonstration by the Father to the Gentiles as well as the Jews that God had not overlooked them in redemption.

Presently, therefore, Jews and Gentiles have already received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit as a pledge or earnest from the Father that they have an inheritance. The Jews received it at Pentecost; the Gentiles at the house of Cornelius.

This teaching on Ephesians 1:12,13 is in keeping with the context of the first part of Ephesians. The writer speaks of "the Gentiles in the flesh," called "uncircumcision" and formerly alienated (2:11,12). But they are now "no more strangers and sojourners," but "fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God" (2:19). They are "fellow-heirs and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (3:6). Paul further affirms that he was made a minister to preach unto the Gentiles and make all men see this mystery which had before not been revealed. It is clear, then, that the point of Paul's lesson is that the Gentiles also had received the Holy Spirit as a pledge of God's having made them a part of his heritage.

In conclusion, may we, in a simple statement, set forth what Paul is teaching in Ephesians one. The Gentiles have also received the Holy Spirit of promise. His coming was a pledge or earnest of their inheritance. Therefore, since both Jew and Gentile have now received the like outpouring, they are both heirs and reconciled together in one body unto God. Every Gentile today, as well as every Jew, may be assured of his right to the gospel by this pledge or earnest made by God when he poured out His spirit on all flesh. On the Jew at Pentecost and the Gentile at the house of Cornelius.

This may be, for some, too simple an explanation for such (to them) a complex subject. Yet, it is obviously what Paul teaches on the matter.

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